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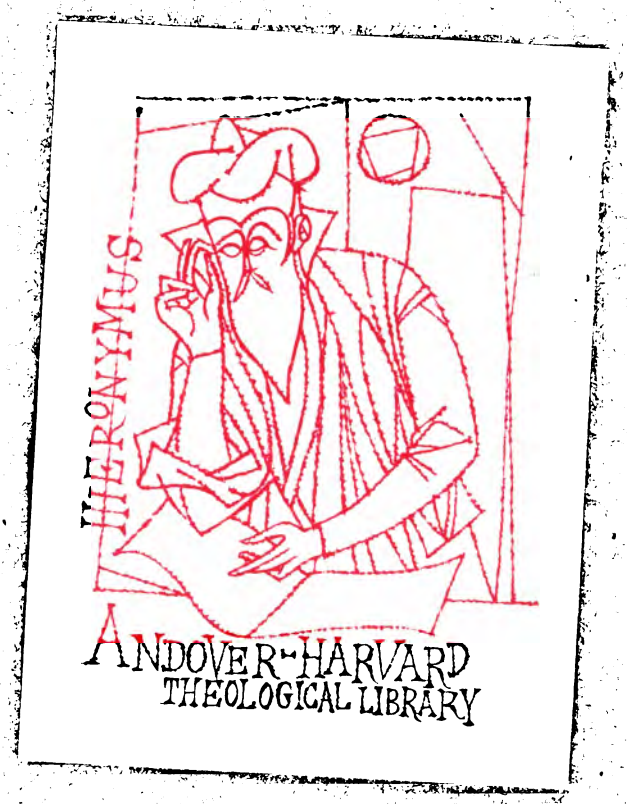
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THEOLOGY, AND NOT RELIGION, THE SOURCE OF DIVISION AND STRIFE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

DR. LOWELL'S SERMON,

PREACHED MAY 14, 1829,

AT THE

ORDINATION OF MR. JOHN L. SIBLEY,

AS MINISTER OF THE CHURCH IN STOW.

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A

SERMON,

PREACHED MAY 14, 1829,

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AS MINISTER OF THE CHURCH IN STOW.

BY CHARLES LOWELL,
MINISTER OF THE WEST CHURCH, IN BOSTON.

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SERMON.

1 TIMOTHY, vi. 3, 4.

IF ANY MAN TEACH OTHERWISE, AND CONSENT NOT TO WHOLESOME WORDS, EVEN THE WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE DOCTRINE ACCORDING TO GODLINESS, HE IS PROUD, KNOWING NOTHING, BUT DOTING ABOUT QUESTIONS, AND STRIFES OF WORDS, WHEREOF COMETH ENVY, STRIFE, RAILINGS, AND BITTER SURMISINGS.

SUCH, as is expressed in the last clause of the text, was the effect in the days of the apostle, and such has been the effect in every subsequent period, of a departure from *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and an inattention to the fact that his doctrine is simply *a doctrine which is according to godliness*. Not satisfied with what is revealed,—with the plain, intelligible truths of the bible,—men have been disposed to exercise their ingenuity, or indulge their fancy, on subjects that were obscure, or left wholly in darkness. The abstract nature of the GODHEAD, the divine decrees, the ingredients of future happiness and future misery, and various other topics, on which it hath not pleased GOD to give us precise information, have too much occupied, and do still too much occupy, the minds of men, to the neglect of those truths which it most

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concerns them to know. There is still, as there has always been, *a doting about questions, and strifes of words*, and the consequence is, as it always has been, *envy and strife and railing and evil surmisings.*

All the revelations of God's works and word, and all the dispensations of his providence, have one end, and one only,—the moral improvement of his intelligent creatures.

It is true that in the works of nature there is much that seems to be addressed only to the intellectual part of man, and much that appears only designed to gratify his senses. A wide field is opened before him, in which he may 'expatiate free,' and find, at every step, new stores of knowledge, and new sources of enjoyment. But in all the provision that is made for the gratification of sense and intellect, there is a higher end than is answered by this gratification. There is reference to man as a moral and immortal being. The ultimate design of all that God has done in the works of nature to make us wiser and happier, is to make us better.

And so it is with his providence. Be our condition prosperous or adverse, adapted to make us joyful, or to make us sorrowful, the ultimate object is the same. God is infinitely happy because he is infinitely good. He desires that his creatures, like himself, should be happy, but they cannot re-

semble him in his happiness unless they resemble him in his goodness.

We come to the scriptures,—the appropriate theme of our discourse,—and here the same design is apparent as in the other revelations of GOD. There was but one object in the mission of Jesus Christ; there is but one object in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. This object is holiness,—the advancement of the moral perfection of mankind. If Christ gave himself for us, as he surely did, it was that he might *redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* If he *spake as never man spake,* it was because he taught a purer and holier doctrine than the tongue of man had uttered, or the heart of man conceived. Man had wandered from the path of duty, and was lost in the devious, intricate paths of transgression. GOD sent his Son *to seek and to save* him; to bring him back from his wanderings; to reclaim him from disobedience and misery, to duty and happiness.

There is a distinction between theology and religion, an attention to which would go far, I am persuaded, towards healing the divisions which have disgraced the christian church. In its most extensive sense, religion includes theology, in as far as theology relates to the being and attributes of GOD, to his government and will, this is moral theology; but there is a speculative theology, and

a scholastic theology, whose technics are not to be found in the bible, and have little reference to the great purpose for which the bible was given us.

Religion is an internal principle. It has its seat in the heart,[1] and from thence sends forth the life-blood through the whole moral frame. It is found in the wise and the simple, in the learned and the unlearned. Theology, in its strictest sense, is a science. It is founded, as every science must be, on clear, certain, self-evident principles. Speculative theology is,—I know not what. It is one thing with one man, and another thing with another man; and sometimes a very strange, unnatural, distorted thing it is.

Religion, in its proper sense, can be productive of no mischief, but is fitted to be the instrument of great good. In its primitive sense, it implies a bond of union; it binds us to God and to one another; it is a solemn obligation to obedience;—it is godliness, or piety, and consists in the practice of duty to God and to man. Such is the religion of the scriptures, and the only one in which we have any real concern. But theology, as distinguished from this, as consisting in speculation about dogmas and points of *doubtful disputation*, has been productive of much mischief in every age of the church. It has not bound men together, but divided them. It has called off the attention, in too

[1] Matt. xv. 19. Luke xvii. 21. Rom. ii. 29; x. 10. Heb. xiii. 9. &c. &c.

many cases, from the principal objects of religion, and fixed it upon *the anise, mint, and cumin,*— the things of trifling importance, which might *engender strife,* but could not *edify.* In as far as men are theologians in this sense, they are no better, but rather the worse for their theology. They have the *knowledge* which *puffeth up,* but not always *the charity* that *edifieth;* and if they are destitute of this, however much they may know, *they know nothing yet as they* OUGHT *to know it.*

Charity is religion. It is the whole of religion. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken from it without substracting thus much from the religious character. When exercised towards God, it is *piety,* and prompts to all the duties which piety includes, to the cultivation of devout affections, and to the display of these affections in private and public acts of devotion. When exercised towards man, it is *justice* and benevolence, and prompts to all the duties which these include. It does *justly,* giving to all their due; *tribute to whom tribute, honor to whom honor,* respecting the rights of all, and claiming no more than fairly belongs to it. It loves *mercy,* is kind and sympathizing, alleviating, as it is able, the sufferings of humanity. It is an angel of compassion, whose wings are always extended to shelter the defenceless, ever employed in doing good, and finding its own happiness in making others happy.

We see then, why our Saviour included the whole law in these two commandments, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy* GOD *with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself*; and why his apostles describe *love* as *the fulfilling of the law and the end of commandment.* Reflect a moment, my hearers, and you will perceive, I think, that I was not mistaken in saying that charity, or love, was the whole of religion. Under the head of *love to* GOD, or *love to man*, you will find every duty which has reference to your Creator, to your fellow-creatures, and I may add, to yourselves.

Now, speculative theology has done little, if anything, towards promoting this charity, and much—perhaps more than every thing else—towards checking its growth and impairing its influence. It has erected walls of separation. It has opened the floodgates, and let out the bitter waters of contention which have mingled with the pure, refreshing, fertilizing streams of divine truth, and often dyed them with blood. I tremble when I witness the presumption of men, dogmatizing about things of which they know nothing and can know nothing with certainty, attempting to withdraw the veil (or affecting to have withdrawn it) which Infinite Wisdom has seen fit to interpose between our feeble sight and the nature of his Essence, or the operations and results of his government. I mourn that good men should so often mispend their time, and

lose their good temper, in teaching men to *bite and devour one another*, when they might be so much better employed in teaching their fellow-christians to bring their passions *into subjection to the law of Christ*, and in learning, at the same time, more effectually to subdue their own.

Sad is it when those publications which are the organs of 'religious parties,' become the vehicles of crimination and recrimination, descend to bitter invective, or unkind insinuation, when a spirit is manifested most foreign to the mild spirit of the gospel, and language used which would be far from honorable on the arena of political warfare, and would not be tolerated in the intercourse of private life. We may well address to those who conduct them the rebuke which their master addressed to his first disciples when they were for calling down fire from heaven upon a city of the Samaritans,—*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* No. They are men, encompassed with infirmities, like others, and doubtless believe themselves to be *zealously affected in a good thing*. The zeal which they discover, they imagine to be *a zeal for* GOD and truth, when it is a zeal for their own theories, which they have magnified far beyond their just proportions, which may be true or may be false, but have little or no influence in promoting the great end of christianity.

That end, I repeat,—and I would it could be sounded in the ears of theological combatants till

they were compelled to yield their attention to it,—that end is *godliness*, and it is the losing sight of this, that gives rise to the *strife and railing* of which the apostle speaks. Were this end kept steadily in view, there would be no contention but who should best answer it. It is absurd to say that a contentious spirit can exist when there is a sincere, heartfelt conviction of this fact, and a paramount desire to promote its exemplification in ourselves and others.

There has been much misconception, I am persuaded, and consequent misrepresentation of the opinions of those who have taken a stand against controversy, but I will not retort, in their behalf, the charges of want of discrimination, and the taking but a superficial, contracted view of the subject, or of ignorance and timidity, which have been so lavishly bestowed. If I am not mistaken, there has been no opposition to controversy but when it has been employed about theological dogmas, or when it has degenerated into contention and strife.

Such is the controversy of the present day, which is not a controversy about *religion*, but *theology*,—*speculative theology*; not about what the bible has really taught, but about the various, contradictory doctrines which it has been *said* to teach. It is a controversy about terms, or opinions as opposite to one another as light and darkness, about systems and theories, which systemongers and theorists have framed out of something which has been said, or has

not been said in the word of GOD.—And what has been the effect of this controversy?—I speak of the controversies of the present day; I do not ask you to go back and contemplate the mournful tragedies which have been enacted by controversialists in the times that are gone by.—Open your eyes, my hearers, and look at the page of church history which is spread out before you. What heartburnings, divisions, evil surmisings, railings, bitter contentions does it not exhibit!—in families, and churches, and parishes, and towns. How many churches, once united and flourishing, have been rent asunder and their dismembered parts scattered by the wind,—I might in most cases say by *every wind*,—of theological *doctrine!*—If the seamless coat of Christ had been woven by the hand of man, it would long since have been torn in pieces by those who have claimed it as their exclusive property, or have contended about its colour, or texture, or the materials of which it is made. What a melancholy aspect does this commonwealth exhibit, in this particular, compared with what it once did, to a religious observer who loves peace, and believes that the religion of Christ was designed to promote it?

But, I am triumphantly asked, if it be admitted that controversy has disturbed the repose of the church, has it not excited an activity which has promoted its life and vigor? If it has troubled the waters, has it not brought up and mingled with them ingredients which have imparted salutary and

healthful qualities? I answer,—not in triumph, but in deep sorrow,—NO; at least such has not been its tendency. It has rendered them the waters of strife, and not of healing. It has led to an increased attention to theology, but not religion. If it has promoted the searching of the scriptures, it has not been, in most cases, in a manner adapted either to elicit the light of truth, or the genial warmth of christian charity. Whatever of moral good has been the effect, has resulted, not from the controversy, but from the piety that has often been mingled with it, which would have appeared to better advantage and exerted a better influence if it had been found in better company. If places of worship have been multiplied, with what spirit,—when it has been the effect of controversy,—have they been erected, and what spirit do they diffuse?

Now let us suppose, my friends, that the same talents and learning which have been expended in the service of controversy, had been devoted, with equal labor and zeal, to the cause of vital religion, I ask you whether effects incalculably more beneficial would not have been produced? I ask you whether there would not have been a more diligent searching of the scriptures, with a less prejudiced spirit and a less misguided intention? I ask whether there would not have been a purer and not less earnest zeal for the house of GOD? I ask, if there had not been more talk about religion, whether there would not have been more religious conver-

sation? For what is the religious conversation, as it is falsely termed, which you hear on all sides? Do we hear the anxious inquiry, *What shall we do to be saved?*—How shall we acquire that temper and form those habits which will fit us for heaven? On the contrary, are not the changes of party continually ringing in our ears, points of *doubtful disputation?* We hear of unitarianism and trinitarianism, orthodoxy and liberality, till we are sick of the very names. These may indeed be said to be *ordinary* topics of conversation, for they mingle themselves with the current and lose their distinctive religious character, if they ever had any. They come in to supply the lack of public or domestic intelligence, or they come in to serve as the vehicle of uncharitable censure or harsh recrimination. They alternate with the concerns of the nation, and the concerns of the state, with the business of the exchange and of the farm and the workshop, with the amusements of the theatre and the ball room. The name of the high and holy GOD, before whom angels veil their faces and adore, and of his Son Jesus Christ, the *brightness of his glory and the express image of his person*, are too often introduced with the same familiarity as the names of frail, sinful mortals, like ourselves, and subjects of religion are discussed in the same spirit as the politics and news of the day. Nor is conversation about religion, even when conducted with seriousness, always less exceptionable in its character. Allu-

sions, or distinct reference to the opinions of others, with a view to condemn, not the opinions themselves, but those who hold them, attributing to others opinions which it is by no means certain they entertain, accusing others of a want of vital religion because their opinions are deemed erroneous,—such conversation is very far from being religious conversation, though wearing the guise of religion.

And here I would freely acknowledge that ministers as well as people,—yea, ministers much more than people, for much of the sin must be laid at their door,—have reason to humble themselves that they have often exhibited so poor an example of that forbearance and charity which are essential to the christian character. They ought to be 'examples to the believers in *word*, in *conversation*, in *charity*, as well as in faith and purity.' And if we are not, my hearers, we have only to exhort you not to follow our example, but the example of Him whose instructions were a *lesson* of charity, and who *lived* as he taught. It has been said that a kinder and less rancorous spirit is beginning to prevail in the theological world. I wish it may be so. I would have the peace and union of the times to which I have adverted, with a warmth and an engagedness for a real and rational revival of religion which perhaps did not then exist.

But has not the cause of truth, on the whole, been advanced by this controversy? Let us

see whether this question can be settled by a resort to the controversialists themselves? Ask the calvinist, and what is his reply? 'Undoubtedly!—Error has been dragged out from its lurking places, and is in a fair way to be hunted down. It had worn the lovely form of orthodoxy, but has been stripped of its disguise and shown in all its native hideousness. *The faith once delivered to the saints* is triumphing over all opposition. Orthodox churches have increased fourfold, and are increasing daily.' Put the same question to the unitarian, and what does he say? 'Most certainly! "The blood of the martyrs" has always been "the seed of the church." *The sect everywhere spoken against* will soon be predominant; unitarian churches are multiplying so fast, it is impossible to find ministers to supply them.' Send forth your inquiries through various sects, and you will meet with the same hearty response. And which must we believe?—I believe them all.

If it be asked, amidst the dogmas of these various sects,—and a multitude of others which time would fail me to mention,—*What is truth?* I answer, not the technics, or the peculiar dogmas of either, but whatever of piety,—I might say of christian charity, or love,—is found among them all. Religious truth has been promoted by controversy so far as this has been promoted, and no farther. This is the great doctrine of the bible, and this is a doctrine about which, among the pious, there is no

dispute. There is no contest about humility, or meekness, or benevolence, or devotion, or any of the constituents of piety. How far any of these,—humility and meekness, for example,—have been promoted by controversy, I leave it for the controversialists to settle among themselves.

Still it may be asked, Are there not doctrines in the bible which have an important influence in promoting piety? Undoubtedly,—but what are they? What a multitude of discordant voices are lifted up in reply!—What a din of conflicting opinions!—*Lo here! and lo there!* If I may hope to be heard, I will answer the question then myself. They are those which he who goes to his bible with a sincere desire to *do* the will of God will find there. What these are, every such inquirer must answer for himself.

But is not the more elevated tone of morals, the change for the better in many of the habits of the community, owing in a good measure to the excitement which controversy has produced? No. It is owing to the progress of refinement, to the advancement of knowledge, to the better means of education, and the more general use of them, to the alteration in the mode of intercourse between the elder and younger members of society,—especially between parents and children,—as well as to the blessing of God upon the efforts of the pious, and not to *doubtful disputation.*

But it is said, that, in opposing controversy, we

oppose christianity, for christianity was a controversy; we oppose the reformation, for the reformation was a controversy. If I mistake not, I have already furnished a reply to this assertion in the remarks I have made. If christianity and the reformation were controversies, if it be not a perversion of these hallowed names to give them this designation, as it is now understood, they were controversies with superstition and vice, and therefore controversies of a very different description from those with which we are now concerned. The doctrine of the reformation,—whatever its practice,—was the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the right which every man had to search and understand them for himself. I leave it to you to decide, my hearers, whether the friends or the foes of controversy are acting most consistently with the principles of the reformers? Who is it that impugns, virtually, if not intentionally, the sufficiency of the scriptures, and interferes with the right of free, unshackled inquiry? Is it, or is it not the theological dogmatist[1] who insists on the reception of his views of religion as the only indication of an enlightened mind, or of a sanctified heart?

After all, for myself, I have no contention with theological controversy, as such. It is only when it identifies itself with religion, and assumes to be lawfully contending under the banners of the cross,

[1] In using this term I use it technically, and not reproachfully.

that I lift my voice against it. It is when it would encumber David with the armour of Saul, instead of allowing him to go forth in his own simple garb to smite the Philistine with his sling and his stone. It is when it comes into the church, and kindles its *strange fire* upon the altar, and obscures by its smoke the pure and brilliant flame of divine truth which is burning there. Let them call it theology, or metaphysics, or what they will, and they may dispute about it as long as they please, being careful only that in their zeal for their theology, they do not lose their *religion*. If any one thinks that the doctrines he holds in speculative theology, or in any of the sciences, are well adapted to promote piety, he may recommend them to others by the force of argument and the power of moral suasion, and if he insists on calling this controversy, be it so,—I will not quarrel with him about words. Let him do it, however, with meekness, not denouncing those who differ from him as foolish or reprobate, and let him not be sanguine of the reception of his opinions, or of their permanence if received. The history of the church will tell him that one set of theological opinions has prevailed in one age, and another set of theological opinions in another age; and again, that old ones have been revived, and new ones given place to them. So it has been, and so it will be, 'pope against pope, and council against council,'[1] till popes and councils shall

[1] Chillingworth.

learn,—if they ever will learn,—that *the kingdom of* GOD *is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

It is hard that religion should bear the odium of causing divisions when its spirit is as gentle as the spirit of its author, and its doctrines as clear as if written with a sunbeam, so that *he who runs may read*, and *wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*[1] No! *religion* has never been the cause of division in the church, and never can be. It was this which was announced with the proclamation of *peace on earth and good will towards men*, and it was this which was breathed in the parting accents of the Saviour,—*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* Wherever it comes, it brings a blessing, and not a curse. In every age, and in all circumstances, it has imparted *a peace which the world could not give.* It has been the polestar amidst the darkness of the night to guide the doubtful voyager on the ocean of life. It has been the light amidst the raging of the billows, and the perils of a dangerous coast, to direct to a secure and peaceful haven. It has been the rainbow in the cloud, foretelling that the storm was passing, the harbinger of a serene and cloudless sky.

The young have felt its power and enjoyed its

[1] Isaiah xxxv. 8. I beg the attention of the reader to this verse. It is supposed to refer to the gospel. 'And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of *holiness*,—and wayfaring men,' &c. I do not know that I could desire a better illustration of the doctrine of this discourse; there are many such both in the old and new testaments.

consolations, and amidst the afflictions from which even early life is not exempt, have experienced, in this sense, the truth of the prophet's declaration, *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* Mature age has felt its power and enjoyed its consolations, and, amidst the toils and anxieties of active life, has turned to it from *the heat and burden of the day,* as to *the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* The aged have felt its power and enjoyed its consolations, sustaining them under the infirmities of old age, and enabling them to *wait,* with serenity and cheerfulness, *all the days of their appointed time till their change come.* The dying, at every period of life, have felt its power and enjoyed its consolations, inspiring them with a hope which has been *an anchor of the soul, entering within the vail,* and giving them a foretaste of heavenly joy.

I congratulate you, my brother, that you enter on the ministry under circumstances so felicitous; with so much unanimity on the part of those who have called you to take the pastoral charge of them, and in a place where the harmony has never been disturbed by the harsh, discordant, notes of theological controversy. I congratulate you,—but I remind you that the peculiarity of these circumstances imposes on you a peculiar responsibleness. You will have need of much wisdom and prudence to preserve this unanimity, and of much decision and firm-

ness to resist the attempts of the zealous of all parties to disturb this harmony. If you would keep peace, labor to diffuse among your people the spirit of genuine piety,—to make them *religious*. If you would promote alienation and discord, labor to imbue them with the spirit of controversy,—to make them *theologians*. If you would keep peace, teach them to study their bibles; if you would promote alienation and discord, direct them to the fallible interpretations of fallible men.

If you find among your people a calvinist who is humble, charitable, devout; or a humble, charitable, devout unitarian, be not so anxious to convert him to your theology, if it differs from his, as to encourage him to *go on unto perfection*, cultivating more and more diligently *the mind that was in Christ*, and laboring to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour*. It may be, if you change his mode of faith, that you will destroy his charity, or cast him without a helm upon the sea of doubt, to make *shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*. It may be that his mode of faith may be best adapted to promote piety in him, and that it was in the mercy of God that he was allowed to embrace it.

I know you will be told that you must indoctrinate your people with your own theological system, if you unfortunately have any, in self-defence. This language is unbecoming christians. You are *set for the defence of the words of our Lord Jesus*

Christ, and the doctrine according to godliness, and the best way you can defend it is to promote its growth and strength and efficacy in yourself and others. The most certain means of effecting this are the study of the scriptures, devout meditation, watchfulness and prayer. So sure,—hear the warning voice, not of superior sagacity, but of superior experience;—so sure as you disseminate among your people the writings of controversialists, so surely will you awaken among them a spirit of inquiry, respecting things of minor importance, which you can neither restrain nor direct; and perhaps you would not think me unkind, if, in the frankness of my heart, I should utter the wish, which my regard for your welfare, as well as theirs, would lead me to form, that *they* would have the wisdom not to read them.

But I have no fears of this. It is my conviction that you will go forth among this people with the single desire of promoting their spiritual improvement,—*of winning them to Christ.* I am persuaded,—GOD, who knoweth the heart, only knows!—I am persuaded that you will *study the things that make for peace*, and that in public and private, *in season and out of season*, in the house and by the way, you will diligently sow the seeds of divine truth, and *watch for souls as* one *who must give an account.*

It is your privilege to be allowed to avail yourself of the experience of your aged predecessor,

who retires from a peaceful ministry of more than fifty years I need not enjoin, what your own heart will prompt, that you should do what you may to smooth the path of his declining life by your respectful and affectionate attentions.

Go, then, my brother, with a humble sense of your own weakness and insufficiency, and a humble, yet firm reliance on superior strength; with a deep conviction of the infinite importance of fidelity and earnest prayer that you may have grace to be faithful,—go, and take the charge of these immortal beings. Teach them to love GOD and to love one another. Tell them to *mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them.* Tell them to beware that they do not lose the experience they now have *how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* Tell them that GOD *is love, and that he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in* GOD *and* GOD *in him.*—And may the presence and blessing of GOD go with you! May your life, if it be best for you, be as long as the life of your predecessor. May you come to the grave ripe in years, and in christian graces, and receive the reward of fidelity in the kingdom of GOD.

THE LORD KEEP AND BLESS YOU. THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO YOU. THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE.

SERVICES AT THE ORDINATION.

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER AND SELECTIONS FROM SCRIPTURE, By Mr. ROBINSON, of Groton.

SERMON, By Dr. LOWELL, of Boston.

ORDAINING PRAYER, By Dr. RIPLEY, of Concord.

CHARGE, By Mr. NEWELL, the sen. pastor.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP, By Mr. EMERSON, of Boston.

ADDRESS TO THE SOCIETY, By Dr. HARRIS, of Dorchester.

CONCLUDING PRAYER, By Mr. WHITE, of Littleton.

The musical performances consisted of an anthem and two original hymns.

The town of Stow was settled in 1653, by two adventurers from Charlestown, Kettle and Boon, on lands known by their names to this day. It was incorporated May 16, 1683. In 1686 the first church was erected and a house for the minister. In 1700 Rev. John Eveleth, a graduate of Harvard, was ordained minister, and continued about seventeen years. In 1713 the second house of worship was built. Rev. John Gardner, a native of Charlestown and a graduate of Harvard, was ordained Nov. 18, 1718, and died Jan. 10, 1775. In 1752 the population having increased to 620, the third house of worship was built, and in 1827 the present, neat, classical and commodious edifice was erected by the liberality and enterprise of the present inhabitants. The Rev. Jonathan Newell, a native of Needham, and a graduate of Harvard, was ordained colleague with Mr. Gardner October 11, 1774. Mr. Sibley, a native of Union, Maine, and a graduate of Harvard College, was associated with Mr. Newell, May 14, 1829.

ERRATUM. Page 8, for *bitter*, read *evil*.

Order of Exercises

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF

JOHN LANGDON SIBLEY,

OVER THE

CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY

IN

STOW, MAY 14, 1829.

——I....ANTHEM.——

The Lord is in his holy Temple;—Let all the earth keep silence before him.

I.

DUETT.—Author of Good! to thee we turn;
Thine ever wakeful eye
Alone can all our wants discern,
Thy hand alone supply.

II.

O! let thy love within us dwell,
Thy fear our footsteps guide;
That love shall vainer loves expel,
That fear all fears beside.

III.

And O! by error's force subdued
Since oft with stubborn will,
We blindly shun the latent good,
And grasp the specious ill;—

IV.

Not what we wish, but what we want
Let mercy still supply;
The good we ask not, Father! grant,
The ill we ask, deny.

CHORUS.—Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. And thy blessing is among thy people.

II...*Introductory Prayer*, and
III...*Selections from Scripture*, } By Rev. Mr. Robinson. of Groton

IV...ORIGINAL HYMN. by E. P. Peabody

I.

Lord! within thy temple gate
Flock and Pastor on Thee wait,
Unto Thee, our Father, Friend,
One in voice and heart we bend
Whilst for thy rich grace we pray
On the bonds we form to day,—
Thou on whom alone we rest,
Bless us and we shall be blest.

II.

Bless us whilst we hand in hand
Journey towards the better land;
Foes we know are to be met,—
Snares the pilgrim path beset,—
Clouds upon the valley rest,—
Rough is the dark mountain's breast,—
And our home may not be gained
Save through trials well sustained.

III.

May we ever onward move
Linked in closest bonds of love,
Striving for the holy mind
And the soul from sense refined,
That when life no longer burns
And the dust to dust returns,
With the strength which Thou hast given,
We may rise to Thee and Heaven.

IV.

God of mercy! on Thee all
Humbly for thy blessing call.—
Save us from the evil tongue
And the heart that thinketh wrong,
And the sins, whate'er they be
That divide the soul from Thee.—
God of grace! on Thee we rest,
Bless us and we shall be blest.

V.... *Sermon*, by Rev. Dr. LOWELL. of Boston

VI..... *Ordaining Prayer*, by Rev. Dr. RIPLEY. of Concord

VII....ORIGINAL HYMN. by W. Bulfinch

I.

Oh Thou, who gav'st thy Son
For sinful man to die!
Through him to Thee, the all-holy One
Thy people now draw nigh.

II.

We bless thy bounteous hand;
And ask thy further grace
On thy young servant, called to stand
Here in thy holy place.

III.

Breathe in his mind, Oh Lord!
The spirit of thy Son;
Thy holiest influence still afford,
And make his breast thy throne.

IV.

Give *us* the willing ear,
The attentive, docile mind,
Thy gracious word with joy to hear,
Thy heavenly peace to find.

V.

And on the aged head
Of him, whose hand of yore
Hath broke for us the living bread,
Thy constant blessings pour.

VI.

And when, to dust restored
Thy servants sink to rest,
May we with them, all-gracious Lord!
Before thy throne be blest.

VIII....*Charge*, by Rev. Mr. NEWELL. of Acton

IX.....*Right Hand of Fellowship*, by Rev. Mr. EMERSON. of Boston

X....TRIO.

Our souls by love, together knit,
Cemented, mix in one,
One hope, one heart, one mind, one voice,
'Tis Heav'n on earth begun;
Our hearts have burn'd while Jesus spoke,
And glow'd with sacred fire.—
We stopp'd, and talk'd, and fed, and bless'd,
And fill'd the enlarged desire.

CHORUS.

A Saviour let creation sing,
A Saviour let all Heaven ring,
He is with us, we call him ours,
His fulness in our souls he pours;
'Tis almost done, 'tis almost o'er,
We're joining those who are gone before,
We then shall meet to part no more.

XI....*Address to the Society*, by Rev. Dr. HARRIS. of Dorchester

XII....*Concluding Prayer*, by Rev. Mr. WHITE. of Littleton

XIII...ANTHEM.

The Lord will comfort Zion, he will comfort her waste places and make her like Eden, like the Garden of the Lord.

Joy and gladness shall be found therein, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all Angels cry aloud, the Heavens and all the powers therein, to the Cherubim, the Seraphim, continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of Sabaoth, Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy Glory.

XVI....**BENEDICTION.**

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